



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON DC 20310

2004 ARMY BIRTHDAY MESSAGE

On the fourteenth day of June in 1775, the Continental Congress established our Army. In the 229 years since that day, our Army has proven itself on countless battlefields as liberty's best friend and oppression's worst foe.

Since its birth—over a year before the Declaration of Independence—the United States Army has played a vital role in the growth and development of the American nation. From winning our new nation's independence in a tough eight-year fight, to preserving the Union through the tortuous struggle of the Civil War, through the global conflicts of the 20th Century, our citizens can draw great satisfaction from knowing that whenever the nation was in need, our Army answered the call.

Sixty years ago, in the Army's birth month of June 1944, our brave Soldiers stormed ashore at Normandy to begin the final thrust to liberate Western Europe. While that beachhead was expanding, our Soldiers liberated Rome, made gains against Japanese invaders in New Guinea, struggled against terrain, weather and a tough enemy in Burma, and reinforced the U.S. Marine Corps on Saipan. We celebrate our veterans of 1944 on this 229th Army birthday, as we also celebrate the service of our younger U.S. veterans who fought in Korea, Vietnam, Panama, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other conflicts.

Today's Army is the greatest land fighting force in the history of the world. This spring, we completed the largest troop movement since World War II, while continuing our engagement in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Our Army is serving in more than 120 countries, conducting missions across the spectrum of conflict from humanitarian assistance to combat operations. While at war, we are continuing to change our Army to meet the needs of the current and future strategic environment.

Our Army is strong, and this strength comes from our greatest asset: the American Soldier, whose courage, compassion, and determination have for generations been the bedrock upon which our victories have depended. In all that the Army has accomplished, and all that it will be called upon to do, the American Soldier remains the single most important factor in our success.

We are proud of you, our Army family—Soldiers, civilians, retirees, veterans, and your families, and you are always foremost in our prayers and in our actions. Thank you for your service, for your sacrifices, and for your steadfast devotion to duty. Your courage, dedication, and selfless service to the nation are the hallmarks of the United States Army.

God bless each and every one of you and your families, and God bless America.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Peter J. Schoomaker".

Peter J. Schoomaker
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Les Brownlee".

Les Brownlee
Acting Secretary of the Army